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The Edict of Religion: A Comedy and The Story and Diary of My Imprisonment. By Carl Friedrich Bahrdt. Translated, edited, and with an introduction by John Christian Laursen and Johan van der Zande. Lanham: Boulder, New York, Oxford: Lexington Books. 2000. Pp. 131, ISBN 0-7391-0089-0.

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witch accusations any less an expression of gendered fears. As Carol Karlsen points out in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (New York, 1987), women just as much as men could absorb and mobilize insidious gender stereotypes, while some female accusers may have targeted in other women witch-like qualities that they also identified and feared in themselves. Stephens notes that male as well as female witches purportedly had sex with demons, but even so the association of a crime seen as predominantly female with unbridled sex was surely part of a larger cultural enterprise that portrayed women as especially, though not exclusively, prone to moral and physical disorder.

The incorporation of sexual license into the witch stereotype was also bound up with issues of social control and moral reformation. Witch prosecutions played an important role in a broader campaign to reshape popular mores. By portraying a range of unauthorized sexual practices as demonic, religious and secular authorities sought to discourage people from engaging in illicit sex and to strengthen the case for ruthless suppression of such activities. By including unauthorized sex in the stereotype of all that a virtuous and orderly citizen ought not to be, officials hoped to legitimize and enforce the boundaries that they delineated between licit and illicit sex.

Not all readers of *Demon Lovers* will be convinced that the defensive intellectual endeavor anatomized so brilliantly by Stephens should be privileged over issues of gender and social control in explanations of why sex became so central to the late medieval and early modern witch stereotype. Yet there can be no doubt that Stephens has uncovered an important new element in that stereotype's evolution. His book constitutes a major breakthrough in our understanding of witch beliefs and their intellectual underpinnings. In drawing our attention to a series of complex and potentially recondite theological issues, Stephens never loses sight of the human emotions that drove intellectual debate. This is a supremely humane as well as insightful work.

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The Edict of Religion: A Comedy and The Story and Diary of My Imprisonment. By Carl Friedrich Bahrdt. Translated, edited, and with an introduction by John Christian Laursen and Johan van der Zande. Lanham: Boulder, New York, Oxford: Lexington Books. 2000. Pp. 131. $75.00. ISBN 0–7391–0089–0.

Bahrdt's 1788 play, "The Edict of Religion," is an unusual piece of satire. It takes on the that takes the form of a commentary on the new Edict of Religion issued in Prussia in 1788 by Frederick William II. As Laursen remarks in his

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introduction, it was probably not written to be performed, but rather to be read aloud (p. 5). Upon its publication it was deemed worthless as a literary production by contemporary commentators (p. 2). Why then does it then merit the attention of twentieth-century readers? Together with the "Story and Diary of my Imprisonment," as well as the editors' introduction and careful annotations, this first English edition of the comedy provides an excellent starting point for studying the Enlightenment debate in Prussia at the time of the French Revolution. The play is part of the large body of pamphlets pro and contra the Edict of Religion, which was designed to limit freedom of conscience in order to protect the established churches. This edict was soon to be followed by a new Edict of Censorship. The Edict of Religion (also known as the Woellner edict) had been drafted by Johann Christoph Woellner, the newly appointed Minister of the Spiritual Department, who is now considered as to be one of the driving forces behind the Counter-Enlightenment in late eighteenth-century Prussia.

The comedy is outstanding in character for its unbiased defense of "the right to believe in, to profess, and to exercise one's religion" as a "general human right" and for accusing the king of being "an overt tyrant, who snatches from a large portion of his citizens a natural right and grants it exclusively to another portion, which in this case is the Protestant church" (p. 27). This appeal to the rights of man supports the claim of the editors that Carl Friedrich Bahrdt was in fact the author of the comedy, although he tried to convince the public that he had only been involved with the publication arrangements (pp. 90–91). Denounced by his secretary, Bahrdt was imprisoned on 7 April 1789, and after long lengthy inquisitions and solitary imprisonment confinement (that he describes in the "Story and Diary"), he was eventually sentenced to two years' imprisonment in at the fortress at in Magdeburg. In this way the Prussian authorities made an example of Bahrdt in their attempt to suppress the radical Enlightenment. The edict was not intended as a measure to eliminate any religious toleration, but rather as a means to oppress minorities such as the "socinians," "deists," and "naturalists," who were accused of misleading the people "under the much abused bannername of *Enlightenment*" (text of the edict, quoted p. 37). In contrast to the benign neglect and indifference toward religion under Frederick II, Frederick William II aimed at restoring orthodoxy in the three officially recognized denominations (the Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic Churches).

Bahrdt was a representative of the radical Enlightenment and was notorious for his critique of orthodox Christianity. As he narrates in the first part of "Story and Diary," he played an important role in the history of the secret societies of his time. In 1777 Bahrdt was inducted into the Order of the Freemasons in London. Later on he was somehow involved in founding and building the

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"Deutsche Union," an organization designed to consist of hundreds of clubs to promote the Enlightenment throughout German-speaking Europe. The secret leadership structure of the clubs reflects the fact that freedom to think and to write were was still limited at the time. Bahrdt was among the first who claimed that the freedoms to think and to express one's thoughts orally or in writing were human rights and natural rights ("On Freedom of the Press and Its Limits"), and the call for these freedoms was to be echoed in the comedy.

The play is divided into five acts, although as Bahrdt remarks in the dedication, it should not be seen "as a final product" (p. 17). This may explain why acts 3 and 4 are not elaborated, but sketched out in brief. The first two acts aim to ridicule Woellner's religious edict, which is quoted in full. It is suggested that the edict was drafted, at Woellner's request, by a certain Blumenbach, the pastor of an insignificant tiny village half way between Halle and Magdeburg. Blumenbach is depicted as a "morose creature" with a "brusque and rude" demeanor, who, moreover, drafts the edict while he is completely drunk. Act 5 shows the edict being received by Prussian society. The scene is the Tiergarten in Berlin, where three groups of people are assembled. The first group consists of shoemakers, tailors, and the like, the second of recently ennobled young ladies and gentlemen, the third of the theologians and philosophers who made up the High Consistory, the church assembly. As Bahrdt suggests in the comedy, they are all adherents of the Enlightenment. Thus one of the theologians observes: "Enlightenment has spread far too much that it could be obliterated again in the nation. No princely power can halt this beam of divine light" (p. 64). As Bahrdt refers to events and real people of eighteenth-century Germany, the comedy provides at the same time an introduction to the principal political debates of the late German Enlightenment as well as a point of access to its main representatives.

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The True Life of Johann Sebastian Bach. By Klaus Eidam. New York: Basic Books. 2001. Pp. xvii + 413. $35.00. ISBN 0–465–01861–0.

A book purporting to be the *true* life of Bach would seem to suggest a warts-and-all or even a warts-added approach, especially as the author writes scripts for television screenplays about Bach and other prominent musicians. But not at all. Eidam sweeps aside all criticism of Bach and even takes issue with the composer's admirers who have chosen to interpret some of his actions in an unfavorable light. Indeed, a large part of his book is devoted to challenging what

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